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AUTHOR Spieczny, Sandra
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ABSTRACT

A study examined how women's magazines covered the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) between 1970 and 1979, especially investigating whether the publications spotlighted or ignored the amendment. Thirteen publications, spanning fashion to homemaking to working women, were analyzed on the basis of editorial profile, frequency of publication, and circulation figures during the 1970s. All issues for the years 1970 to 1979 were examined for extensiveness, characteristics, and intent of coverage. Results showed that "Ms." magazine published more articles (45) than any other magazine, followed by "Redbook" (14). Content analysis revealed that coverage in the early years attempted to educate the reader as to what the ERA would and would not do, discussed the background and history of the amendment, and focused on Phyllis Schlafly as its most vocal opponent. During the middle 1970s, when the debate became heated, stories began to contain intensely personal viewpoints. Articles in 1976 (the year of heaviest coverage, with 29 articles) and 1977 generally expressed little doubt that the amendment would be ratified, but by 1978 when it became apparent that this would not occur by the 1979 deadline, articles asking for an extension began appearing. Quantitative research showed that the top circulation magazines paid scant attention to the amendment compared with the smaller sized and more specialized magazines. Findings suggest that the women's magazines followed the lead of their readership in covering the ERA--in keeping with research showing that specialized magazines are read by people who want to reinforce their beliefs and opinions. (Tables of data are included, and 68 footnotes are appended.) (NKA)

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DANCING BACKWARD:

Women's Magazines and the Equal Rights Amendment

1970-1979

Sandra Spieczny
Ohio University
E.W. Scripps School of Journalism
Athens, Ohio 45701

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"Women have always been trouble. Now they've found a new way of making trouble...."[1]

The Suffrage Movement, the equal rights movement, the Feminist Movement, the equal rights movement, the Women's Movement, the equal rights movement. It seems that women have always been trouble. First, they wanted the vote and burned their corsets as a symbolic act. Then they wanted to be known as persons and threatened to burn their bras. And then they found a new way to make trouble.

In July 1970, a group of 200 feminists occupied the office of John Mack Carter, then editor-in-chief of the Ladies' Home Journal. The Journal, with the slogan "Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman," was the second highest circulation women's magazine with an audited circulation of 6.9 million readers and, according to the protesters, "one of the most demeaning magazines towards women."[2] After 11 hours of confrontation and negotiation, Carter agreed to allow the group to write and edit a special supplement in the August issue.[3]

The eight-page supplement, entitled "The New Feminism," dealt with issues relating to women -- work, discrimination, children and simply being a woman.[4]

"Women have always been trouble. Now they've found a new way of making trouble...."[5]

In February 1970, the Pittsburgh chapter of the National

Organization of Women disrupted Sen. Birch Bayh's hearings concerning the 18-year-old vote. The women demanded that hearings be held on the equal rights amendment. Bayh agreed to schedule the hearings and in May 1970, the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments held the first hearings on an equal rights amendment since the Eisenhower administration. Events quickly followed.[6] The House of Representatives passed the equal rights amendment on October 12, 1971, by a 354-23 margin. On March 22, 1972, the Senate passed the amendment by an 84-8 vote. But not before Sen. Sam Ervin of North Carolina, a leading opponent of the amendment, stated: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do...American womanhood will be crucified on a cross of dubious equality and specious uniformity."[7]

"Women have always been trouble. Now they've found a new way of making trouble. It's called the Equal Rights Amendment."[8]

The text of the equal rights amendment states:

1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any other state on account of sex.
2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.
3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

Thirty minutes after the Senate approved those words, Hawaii became the first state to ratify the amendment. The next day, three more states -- Delaware, Nebraska and New Hampshire -- ratified the amendment. They were followed by 24 states in

1972 and 1973. During the period of 1974 to 1977, five states ratified the amendment, bringing the total to 35. In order for the amendment to take effect, not only were 38 states required to ratify, but there was a seven-year limit for ratification. The deadline was originally set to run out on March 22, 1979. Although supporters managed to obtain an extension until 1982, it is the original 1970 to 1979 time period that forms the parameters of this study. This research will examine how women's magazines covered the equal rights amendment.

Jill Ruckelshaus explained during a speech in 1973 that:

> It occurred to me when I was 13 and wearing white gloves and Mary Janes and going to dancing school, that no one should have to dance backward all their lives. 9

The major question concerning women's magazine coverage is did the publications spotlight and focus on the amendment, did they cover it, did they dance around it, or did they dance backward and ignore it?

To determine the sample, it was necessary to define which magazines could be classified as women's magazines. A list was compiled based on the publications listed in Standard Rate and Data Service, Inc. Consumer Magazine Index and The Standard Periodical Directory. Of those magazines listed under "Women" and "Women's Fashion, Beauty and Grooming," 13 publications were selected for the study. The magazines were chosen based on the editorial profile, frequency of publication and circulation figures during the 1970s. A magazine had to be published at

least monthly with a minimum circulation of 200,000 and state in its editorial profile that it was edited for women. Seventeen, Glamour and Woman's Day were omitted as service publications. Playgirl was omitted since it considered itself an "entertainment source" for its readers. For a listing of editorial profiles, see Table A. For circulation figures, see Table B. The 13 magazines chosen were: Cosmopolitan, Essence, Family Circle, Good Housekeeping, Harper's Bazaar, Ladies' Home Journal, Mademoiselle, McCall's, Ms., Parents, Redbook, Vogue and Working Woman. These magazines represent the spectrum from fashion (Harper's Bazaar, Mademoiselle and Vogue) to homemakers (Family Circle, Good Housekeeping) and young marrieds with children and/or jobs (Parents, Redbook) to today's contemporary woman (Cosmopolitan, Ladies' Home Journal and McCall's) to black women (Essence), to the managerial woman (Working Woman) and the activist (Ms.).

This analysis utilized all issues of the magazines from 1970 to 1979. Features and departments were read to analyze the extensiveness of the coverage, the characteristics of the coverage, and why the magazines covered the issue as they did.[10]

Prior to 1972, two magazines -- Ladies' Home Journal and McCall's -- ran stories on the equal rights amendment. McCall's printed three stories in the two years. In the February 1971 issue, the magazine published a six-page special report on "The Geography of Inequality," which dealt with the law as it stands and how it affects women in 50 states regarding their marriage, work and their lives. Ladies' Home Journal, on the other hand, printed a story on the ERA in the same issue as "The

New Feminism" supplement of August 1970. In 1973, while most women's magazines were discussing women's liberation and its effects, three articles on the amendment were printed. Ladies' Home Journal, McCall's and Ms. each published an article, while Redbook's coverage was concentrated on a four-part series, which ended with a questionnaire on "How Do You Feel About Being A Woman?" The questionnaire prompted more than 120,000 responses as well as a letter which stated: "Could it be that someone has finally noticed we wives and mothers do have opinions on subjects other than what brand of shortening we prefer to use?"[11]

Two articles appeared in 1974, and coverage increased in 1975 with seven articles. Coverage peaked in 1976, when 29 articles were published. Eleven appeared in 1977, and 27 in 1978, the year proponents attempted to secure an extension. In 1979, 21 articles were printed. (See Table C).

Ms. magazine published the most articles with 45, followed by Redbook with 14, Working Woman with 10 and McCall's with eight. Particularly noteworthy is that Ms. began publishing in 1972 while Working Woman did not appear on the stands until 1977.

When the articles are divided between features and columns or departments, it is an almost even split. Of the articles published in the 10-year span, 59 were features and 48 were published in departments or columns. (See Table D).

Coverage in the early years attempted to educate the reader as to what the equal rights amendment would and would not do. An article in the Ladies' Home Journal in November 1972

listed seven areas -- state protective labor laws, education, social security, government employees, married women's rights, military and jury service -- that would be affected by the amendment's passage. The article also stressed that the amendment would be "an act of national conscience and a guarantee against second-class citizenship for any woman or man."[12]

In addition to educating the reader, early articles discussed the background and history of the amendment. A story in the June 1973 Redbook covered eight pages and not only related history, but confronted fears being raised by opponents to the amendment. Fears addressed included the military drafting of women, legalization of rape, unisex bathrooms and the breakdown of the family.[13] These four fears would emerge time and time again through the next six years of equal rights amendment coverage.

In addition to the fears, the article also included emotional statements of support by seven famous individuals including President Richard M. Nixon. For example, best-selling novelist Lois Gould wrote:

> If the Equal Rights Amendment fails to pass, then I suggest that the Pledge of Allegiance be revised as follows: "I pledge allegiance to the flag...and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, divided according to gender, with liberty and justice for men only." 14

In 1973, Phyllis Schlafly emerged as the most visible and most vigorous opponent of the equal rights amendment. Traveling across the country on behalf of Stop ERA, a group of which she was national chairman, Schlafly also was featured on the pages

of Ms. A 1973 article attempted to nullify the arguments Schlafly was using to rally the opposition. In 1974, in the only article appearing on the pages of a women's magazine about the equal rights amendment, Ms. devoted seven-and-one-third pages to "The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority."[15] Written as an expose of the Schlafly logic, the article was not above attacking Schlafly personally:

> Of course, Schlafly is hardly one of the typical "housewives" she claims to protect. She doesn't point out that she has full-time domestic help, or that she has been a repeated (and unsuccessful) candidate for political office; or that, according to the New York Times, she publishes most of her books herself. But who asks for details. 16

Schlafly also appeared on the pages of the Ladies' Home Journal, taking part in a forum on the equal rights amendment in the August 1975 issue. Schlafly stated that "the equal rights amendment is the biggest fraud to come down the pike."[17] Included on the page with Schlafly was Jill Ruckelshaus, the presiding officer of the National Commission on the Observance of the International Women's Year, and actor Alan Alda as the "Caught in the Middle" view.

As the amendment stalled in the middle '70s, the debate heated up on both sides and stories began to contain intensely personal viewpoints. When discussing "Why the ERA Frightens Women" in the February and March 1976 issues of Mademoiselle, Karen Durbin, who authors the "Intelligent Women's Guide to Sex" column each month, recalled a discussion with her mother, a Midwesterner, who was not a "revolutionary, nor even a liberal."[18] Durbin's mother had just watched an ERA debate on television and

called the equal rights amendment opponent a "ridiculous woman," explaining that the woman had claimed that:

> Women shouldn't want equality because we are better than equal, we were privileged, and we should be against the equal rights law because it would interfere with our privileges....Who does she think she is? In a democracy, people aren't supposed to have privileges, they're supposed to have rights. Equal rights under the law -- that's what democracy is. 19

Mothers were not the only ones getting angry on the pages of women's magazines. Liz Carpenter, co-chairwoman of ERAmerica, was quoted in a May 1976 McCall's article discussing women's planks in Democrat and Republican platforms:

> The woman's plank [in party platforms] should be a two-by-four with which to swat any legislator who fails to help pass the ERA. Instead of just calling for ratification, we should place the responsibility on elected officials to see that it takes place. 20

Family Circle, the "world's largest-selling women's magazine," published two articles in early 1976 dealing with women's organizations and "Your Rights as a Woman." In the latter article, which appeared in May 1976, it was stressed that the amendment would not make drastic changes in family law, and that it was important to remember that "it's easy to repeal a law....On the other hand, it's very difficult to repeal a constitutional amendment."[21]

1976 was the peak year for equal rights amendment coverage with 29 articles, 14 of which appeared in the July editions of all magazines surveyed except Essence.[22]

Coverage by the magazines ranged from three stories and

five pages in Redbook to one-half page in Good Housekeeping. Redbook coverage included "A Message From Betty Ford on ERA," "What Do Women Stand to Gain" by Maureen Reagan and "What ERA Will Not Do To Women" by Cathleen Douglas. On the other hand, Good Housekeeping ran a one-half page in their "The Better Way" section on "The ERA: Where It Stands Today." The magazine also published a three-page spread on "Women In Passage," its new public affairs program.

Coverage by the magazines had been prompted by Sey Chassler, editor of Redbook, who was concerned about whether the equal rights amendment would be ratified. Chassler contacted and encouraged the editors of all women's magazines to include one or more articles on the equal rights amendment in their bicentennial editions. The content and style of coverage would be determined by each editor.

The 30-odd editors who published articles on the equal rights amendment in their magazines, did so, in the words of Vogue, because:

> No matter which side one agrees with, there is no doubt of the importance and urgency of the discussion. It is for this reason that the editors of 35 women's magazines published in the United States have joined together to discuss the ERA in their July issues. While each magazine will approach the subject matter in its own way, we are unanimous in our opinion that discussion is of primary importance. 23

Some provided balanced accounts, discussing both sides of the issues and giving both sides a forum, while others left no doubt that they had aligned themselves with the amendment. Most of the articles attempted to give sources of information

on both sides to their readers. The Ladies' Home Journal took a different approach, publishing an article entitled "The Next First Lady," which questioned Betty Ford, Nancy Reagan, Rosalynn Carter, Ella Udall, Helen Hackson, Cornelia Wallace and Bethine Church on issues facing America, including "What Is Your Stand on the ERA?" All the women except for Reagan and Wallace were pro-ERA.[24]

Two magazines -- Family Circle and Vogue -- attempted to confront and separate the myth from reality. Ellen Switzer wrote a two-and-one-half-page article for Family Circle, which appeared in its June edition, dealing with the 12 myths that "opponents of the ERA have frightened American women" with.[25] Illustrated with a Doonesbury cartoon which depicted a Colonial wife in the early 1780s, who had written Congress about an equal rights amendment. While discussing the possibility of the amendment with her husband, he tells her she is overreacting as she makes "it sound like it's a couple of hundred years away."[26]

In addition to the cartoon, the article utilized red, white and blue colors, as well as printing the complete text of the proposed amendment and a list of organizations who had endorsed the amendment before taking one myth at a time. Switzer wrote:

> Yet today ERA is in serious trouble. It is being pecked to death by opponents who are well organized and highly publicized and who have raised frightening pictures of family breakdown with mothers forced to leave their children in gigantic federally run and supported day-care facilities to work in coal mines. These opponents also conjure up visions of free abortion clinics on every block, unisex toilets and female soldiers drafted for overseas

> combat duty. No wonder that American women, contemplating these potential horrors, are voting down ratification in state after state. 27

Continuing in the same theme, but pointing out the post-Watergate era as well as an upsurge in right-wing beliefs sparked by the fallout from the swinging, free lifestyle of the 1960s, Susan Sontag wrote in Vogue:

> Enough is enough. Greater evils lurk just around the corner, the abolition of Ladies and Gents. Yes, unisex public lavatories. Combat duty for women in the army. No more alimony. Lesbians on every street corner. Men no longer opening doors for women, lighting their cigarettes, thinking that they ought to (even though they don't) cede women their seats in the crowded subway. All this and more -- brought about by something called the ERA. 28

Articles in July 1976 also asked women to go beyond their own experiences in making a decision about the equal rights amendment. Urged to consider the next generation, readers of McCall's were told that the amendment "is more than a law for the present; it is a legacy for the future."[29] Marilyn Mercer, who wrote the article in McCall's, explained that "it's the hardest piece I ever wrote."[30] She went on to state in the article that:

> A constitutional amendment is more than just a law -- it is a symbol. ERA would do more than nullify discriminatory laws; it would put the nation's stamp of approval on the idea that women are now equal partners with men, sharing on an equal basis the privileges and responsibilities of our society. 31

Parents magazine presented a pro-equal rights amendment argument and a boxed list naming seven of the 80 national

organizations that supported the equal rights amendment as well as seven of the 17 organizations that opposed it. Listed as opponents were: the U.S. Communist Party, the John Birch Society, Humanitarian Opposes The Degrading Our Girls (HOT DOG) and the Ku Klux Klan.[32]

The subject of the draft re-emerged in 1977, not only in the rhetoric of direct mailings, but in the pages of Working Woman. Working Woman was established in 1977 to serve the needs of wormen who worked outside of the home. Editor Beatrice Buckler explained that the magazine was the "first magazine focused entirely on the life and needs of women who work for a living..."[33] The magazine's coverage of the equal rights amendment mirrored much of the discussion in other woman's magazines in 1976. Ann Pincus, reporting in her "Washington Power Play" column in August 1977, stated:

> Phyllis Schlafly and all her crowd spend many hours each day frightening mothers around the country by conjuring up the specter of little girls with Shirley Temple curls fighting on the front lines -- if the Equal Rights Amendment passes. Their rhetoric suggests that the passage of the ERA will result in sweet young things being transformed into lesbians carrying submachine guns (a la the Patty Hearst poster) or being ravished by brutish louts.
>
> The question we progressive women must ask ourselves now is how do we feel about the possibility that our daughters will be in combat? It is a difficult question. No one wants to send her daughter to be cannon fodder. On the other hand, few mothers are anxious to send their sons for cannon fodder either. 34

Prior to 1976 and 1977, articles generally expressed little doubt that the amendment would be ratified. The campaign of July 1976 was the first inkling that the amendment might be

in trouble. When discussing ratification problems, most articles dealt with Schlafly and bathrooms. An October 1977 Redbook article attempted to go beyond the right-wing movement to see why the amendment had stalled. In talking with common people rather than the celebrities who were supporting the amendment, the author found:

> Most women admitted that they really did not know very much about what the equal rights amendment would do. Those who assumed that ERA would change things a great deal were against it. Those who agreed that women should have equal rights had little enough knowledge about what ERA could do for them and enough negative feeling about its image to be wary of working for its passage. 35

The 11 articles that appeared in 1977 were published in three publications -- Ms., Redbook and Working Woman. All highlighted the problems with ratification.

In 1978, it finally appeared that the equal rights amendment was not going to be ratified by its 1979 deadline. Supporters went to Congress and lobbied for and received an extension. Stories ranged from "That ERA Letter You've Meant to Write" in Ms., urging a reader's representative that "there can be no time limit on equality,"[36] to why extension was necessary and who was supporting it. Ms. published 18 of the 27 articles that appeared in 1978, while Working Woman published three and Redbook carried two. Another article included a discussion in Cosmopolitan by Betty Friedan explaining where women were in 1978 compared to the early days of women's liberation and what happened with the equal rights amendment.[37]

Family Circle interviewed Eleanor Smeal, the housewife-president of the National Organization for Women in its Sept. 1, 1978 issue.[38] But it was Redbook, Ms. and Working Woman that mobilized the rich and famous for the equal rights amendment in 1978.

Ms. put together a seven-page article listing comments by 37 entertainers about their feelings on the equal rights amendment. Beside the usual message from Alan Alda, Marlo Thomas and Jean Stapleton, others said why they were for the amendment. While most were personal and serious, Erma Bombeck, the syndicated columnist, jokingly wrote:

> My standard line on the ERA is that twenty-four words have never been so misunderstood since the four words "one size fits all." 39

The Redbook article questioned 30 top elected officials, corporate executives and influential media figures, all of whom supported the extension of the equal rights amendment deadline. Actor Alan Alda issued his strongest admonition thus far, when he questioned:

> Can this be America, where we are debating for seven years whether or not to allow men and women to enjoy equal rights? Let's not disgrace ourselves. Where there is choice, choose justice. 40

And one producer, Robert Altman, not only took a stand, but put up money to back it.

> Why have I pledged $2 million from the profits of my next film to speed passage of the ERA? I believe in it. Being male or female is a condition; it has nothing to do with intelligence or ability or how many rights you're entitled to. We must end the

> bickering and the piecemeal court battles and affirm the rights we have. The ERA is the most important political action of this decade; and if we lose it, it's going to mean a terrible erosion of the whole quality of the life we've created. 41

Another media personality, Carol Burnett, also expressed an argument for extension in Working Woman.

> "Enough is enough," cry our opponents. "Seven years is plenty of time and you've had your chance. Now you want to change the rules of the game in the ninth inning." Seven years is plenty of time? Is equality a game? Setting a time limit on equality is like telling scientists that if they don't find a cure for cancer in 10 years, they will have to stop trying. 42

Also, in 1978, Essence printed its first article about the battle for the equal rights amendment. Earlier articles in Essence pointed out that the women's movement had nothing to do with black women, because the black feminist movement was deeply rooted in the civil rights movement.[43] However, despite these beliefs, a carefully worded article urging black women to work for the passage of the equal rights amendment appeared in October. The article discussed not only how black women would benefit from the amendment, but urged black women to recognize the relationship between the equal rights amendment and the problems they face.[44]

In January 1979, Working Woman started the year discussing the myth that women were taking men's jobs. The article discussed not only the differences in salaries, but how women were not moving quickly into male-dominated and non-traditional professions.[45] Cosmopolitan ran a house advertisement in its February

edition on the "new vital statistics for women." Carving a typical woman up according to percentages based on labor and wages, the magazine asked "If you'd like to change these statistics, then fight for the Equal Rights Amendment."[46]

In a March 1979 article in Working Woman, coverage was focused on the four states -- Florida, Illinois, North Carolina and Oklahoma -- in which there was a chance of ratification. The article also spotlighted the other 11 unratified states and listed names, addresses and phone numbers of people in each of the states to contact.[47]

The bathroom debate surfaced on the pages of April's Redbook in an attempt to end it. In a researched opinion piece, Judy Langford Carter stressed that the amendment was too important to be reduced to unisex toilets.

> If we fail to beat the Bathroom issue, history will surely laugh. Human rights were abridged, it will be said, because the public was too afraid of bathrooms to uncover a political truth. But more devastating than laughter will be our situation without an equal rights amendment. Women -- ourselves, our daughters, our granddaughters -- will remain in legal limbo, citizens without a guarantee of legal rights, governed at the whim of Congress and state legislatures, among them the same legislatures, that are now intimidated by bathroom stories and demogogic tricks. That prospect should be enough to send us scurrying to send letters, money and promises of help to anyone who can make sure the ERA passes by June 1982. 48

Also included in the articles published in early 1979, Redbook and Working Woman used articles in August written by Rosalynn Carter and Alan Alda respectively. In addition, Ms. published an article on how to regroup and pass the amendment,

calling for a new plan involving a four-step process which included building coalitions, raising funds, discussing the equal rights amendment as an economic issue and going on the attack.[49]

Family Circle printed the last of the five stories it ran during the 10-year period, interviewing Phyliis Schlafly in a September article. Describing Schlafly in glowing terms, it was written by an assistant editor at Newsweek magazine and quoted Schlafly as saying that the goals of the equal rights amendment were wrong because "almost every one of them requires more federal spending."[50] Schlafly, who also was quoted as saying that the amendment expired "morally and constitutionally in 1979," also stated:

> I think the rejection of the ERA would be the greatest victory for women's rights since the women's suffrage amendment of 1920. It will mean that we can keep laws that say a husband must support his wife and that gives all kinds of superior support and property rights and benefits to wives, mothers and widows based on family status. 51

In November 1979, the women's magazines joined together again to provide discussion of the amendment. Once again urged by Redbook editor Sey Chassler, 33 women's magazines with a joint circulation of 60 million printed equal rights amendment articles.[52] Eleven of the 13 magazines in this study participated in providing coverage. The two publications, Harper's Bazaar and Family Circle, were conspicious in their absence. While Harper's Bazaar had a circulation of less than one million, Family Circle, the largest circulation publication of the women's magazines, claimed a readership of more than 20 million.[53]

The style and coverage of the amendment in the November issues were again left to the individual magazines. Coverage ranged from an editor's column in Parents and Essence to six pages in Redbook. Essence editor-in-chief Marcia Ann Gillespie's column was a particularly intense personal statement.

> The Equal Rights Amendment is but another means [to secure black Civil Rights]. It does not take the place of the Civil Rights laws that we struggled to achieve, it merely stands beside them helping to bolster the cause of Human Rights in this country....I know that there are people who will say that this is not a black woman's issue, yet they are wrong....
>
> And I did not stand up for my rights as a black person to be told that I have to sit down because I'm a woman. 54

The Parents editor also issued a personal statement when she stressed that the "ERA will not force women out of their homes and away from their children....It will give new legitimacy and stature to traditional women's roles."[55]

The Ladies' Home Journal published statements written by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy and President Jaems Carter, while Good Housekeeping interviewed Eleanor Smeal, president of the National Organization of Woman. Vogue's contribution to the debate was another personal statement by a former nun.[56] McCall's published a one-page discussion of the arguments and effects of the amendment,[57] and Mademoiselle and Working Woman dealt with what the amendment would do for women. The latter discussed the effects on employment, domestic relations, children, marriage, criminals and education, all issues that had been raised during the 10 years

of coverage.[58] On the other hand, Mademoiselle stressed that:

> The ERA will erect a base upon which the courts will build; it's not a law cutting like a scythe through all the tangled knots in our society. The specifics will be decided in courts, which means the decisions will be tailored to the time and the place in which they're made.[59]

Taking the discussion of the law and courts one step further, Cosmopolitan printed an article that systematically discussed what the amendment could and could not do. Written by a Columbia University Law School professor, it discussed the equal rights amendment's relationship with not only the courts and law, but its place in the constitutional pattern. Included also was a consideration of the draft and a restatement of the organizations that supported the amendment as well as the results of opinion polls. The article ended with the statement that:

> Remember, ordinary laws prohibiting sex discrimination can be replaced with relative ease, equal protection decisions regarding gender bias rest on insecure foundation, and Supreme Court Justices can backslide. (Two Justices, in 1977, retreated from sex-equality positions they had taken earlier.) The ERA offers permanence. It commands government to stop channeling your choices and instead allows you to grow, develop and aspire in accordance with your individual talents and preferences. Let's not permit a handful of legislators to keep us from moving into a new decade unleashed from laws that have lost their usefulness and meaning. 60

Redbook's November 1979 coverage was an article entitled the "American Way." The article included not only the text of the amendment, but why it was needed, who supported it, what would be the effects if it was ratified and sources to contact for

volunteering, sending money or obtaining information on ratification. Also included were statements by six men, described as "a proud femirist, four are from states that have not yet ratified the ERA and one is a widely syndicated radio commentator who has not taken a position."[61] Of the six men, including Kancaster Hodges Jr., who delivered the speech for extension made on the floor of the U.S. Senate, it was Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, who wrote with the most emotion when he said:

> The cries of protest that attempted to frighten women into thinking that this amendment would force them to face the harsher aspects of life are the same kinds of voices that once whispered to slaves that they should be reluctant to leave the security of their master's plantation. 62

Examining the coverage of the equal rights amendment from 1970 to 1979 as a whole, it appears at first that women's magazines mobilized their publications behind ratification. But while it is correct that none of the publications urged the non-ratification of the equal rights amendment, it also is true that not all of the publications supported the amendment. Only Redbook and McCall's actually wrote that they supported passage of the amendment. A closer examination of the totals shows that though the rhetoric in the articles was similar, the majority of it was published in Ms. and Redbook. And considering just the quantitative results of ten years of coverage, Cosmopolitan magazine could make a good case when considering not the quantity but the quality of coverage. In fact, it is

the quality which helps shed li ht on understanding the types of coverage women's magazines gave to the equal rights amendment. One way to possibly understand the coverage by the magazines is to borrow comments made by Elizabeth Janeway, author of Man's World, Women's Place, when she was discussing women's liberation in 1974. If one deletes women's liberation from the following tract and substitutes the equal rights amendment, the passage provides a context to understand women's magazine coverage.

> The Women's Liberation Movement -- Am I boring you already? Do the words turn you off? Then hang on for a minute, because that's what I want to talk about: the current state of mind which doesn't quite oppose women's liberation but would really rather not hear any more about it....
>
> Demands for equal rights for women have produced, first, a flurry of joking, and, next, some irritation and anger, but mainly and fundamentally a determination to pay no attention -- a simple, almost animal, retreat into not listening. Not argument, hardly even refusal to argue, but something closer to an instinctive reflex: a refusal to hear.
>
> I think it only natural that what is heard is largely misunderstood and, therefore, what is passed on is mostly misrepresented. A good deal of the time, too, the women's movement is still talking only to itself. 63

The last sentence of Janeway's interpretation holds true regarding coverage of the equal rights amendment. The coverage also closely paralleled the feeling about the equal rights amendment. When it was first passed, proponents believed that there was no way it would not be ratified. Early articles paralleled this thinking. When ratification seemed to be questionable and opinion had formed into two distinct camps, information in articles dealt with the positions of pro and con, rather than

explaining the basics of the amendment. Articles in 1978 dealt mainly with extension, even though, the reader was still not sure about the validity of the amendment. By 1979 and into 1980, Ms., Redbook and Working Woman were the publications still providing discussion of the equal rights amendment.

Returning to a discussion on the quantitative coverage, the top circulation magazines -- Family Circle, Ladies' Home Journal, McCall's and Good Housekeeping published 22 articles in 10 years for an average per publication of one every two years. Redbook, which ranked next in circulation, had the second highest publication record with 14 and an average of almost one-and-a-half per year. So what does this mean? Were the women's magazines, especially the top-sellers, dancing backward when it came to coverage of the equal rights amendment? Taking the statistics at first glance, one would tend to conclude, not really.

Each magazine covered the amendment and its passage through 10 years of debate and voting to some degree and some magazines covered it more than others. But not one publication ignored the equal rights amendment. Keeping in mind that women's magazines are a specialized commodity, it is useless and counter-productive to assume that they are all alike. However, it also follows that another exercise in futility is to assume that the coverage of the equal rights amendment should be alike from publication to publication, even in the women's field.

However, without Sey Chassler's prompting in 1976 and 1979, the statistical figures would tell a different story. Without

the prompting, magazines would have published a total of 78 stories in 10 years for all 13 publications. If we subtract Ms. magazine as not being as mainstream as the other publications, then 36 articles appeared spread between 12 publications in 10 years, which is one article every three and a third years for each publication. To skew the figures even more, subtract Redbook and Working Woman and each of the remaining magazines published less than 2 articles within the entire 10-year span. Dancing backward? Probably.

One can conclude from the quantitative research that the top circulation magazines paid scant attention to the amendment when compared with the smaller sized and more specialized magazines. Does this mean that readers of some women's magazines were not interested in reading about the equal rights amendment? Possibly.

Note the subtle differences in coverage. While several magazines printed articles about Rosalynn Carter, yet Family Circle was the one that did not mention her stand on the equal rights amendment.

Ladies' Home Journal, while stating editor John Mack Carter had been an early supporter of the amendment, handled its coverage with white lace gloves, printing six articles, three of which were less than a page. Family Circle also printed an article in 1976 dealing with the "back-to-home" movement of women giving up full-time jobs to devote themselves to their families.[64]

In a study by Good Housekeeping in March 1971 on how its readers felt about liberation and equality, the results prompted the editors to conclude that "if the leaders of the feminine

liberation movement depended on the readers of Good Housekeeping for backing, they would be out of business before nightfall."[65] This research set the tone for Good Housekeeping's coverage throughout the 10 years.

Parents magazine, which published articles only during 1976 and 1979, did not do so because of lack of possibilities. Editor-in-chief Elizabeth Crow explained that she received mail, literally "dozens of letters, manuscripts and publications from all over the country." All of which either supported or condemned the equal rights amendment. She also pointed out that she gathered "from the editors of other women's magazines that my collection of literature on the subject is not atypical."[66]

The only possible conclusion is that women's magazines were not dancing backward when it came to coverage of the equal rights amendment. They were, quite simply, dancing to the music set by their readership.

A simplistic answer? Yes. But consider a few factors. Research has showed time and again that specialized magazines are read by people who want to reinforce their beliefs and opinions. In a 1977 Lieberman Research Inc. study on magazine buying habits, 45 percent of the respondents felt that magazines should provide both information and entertainment in their editorial mix. These people also felt that magazines "do a good job of keeping them abreast of modern trends, acquainting them with new products...and keeping them informed about subject areas of interest to them..."[67]

Of interest to them. Most magazines were run by men, but to

attempt to conclude men were the reason for the coverage would not only be chauvinistic, but one would have to explain Redbook editor Sey Chassler and his activism on the part of the equal rights amendment.

On the other hand, no magazines lost sizable circulations during the years of 1970 to 1979 and letters to the editor glowed with praise for the scope and style of the equal rights amendment coverage.

A simplistic answer? Yes. But all the signs point to the conclusion that magazines indeed were dancing to the music set by their readership.

Beside as Helen Gurley Brown explained in 1979: "All the women's magazines together may not be as effective as Phyllis Schlafly with her rabble-rousing TV appearances."[68]

TABLE A

EDITORIAL PROFILE

COSMOPOLITAN is edited for young women, single or married, and concerns self-improvement, careers, clothes, beauty, travel, entertainment and the arts with special emphasis on the world outside the home. Editorial emphasis is on helping young women realize the very most of themselves.

ESSENCE is the magazine for today's black woman. Edited for career-minded, sophisticated and independent achievers. Essence's editorial is dedicated to helping its readers attain their maximum potential in various lifestyles and roles. The editorial content includes career and educational opportunities; fashion and beauty; investing and money management; health and fitness; parenting; information on home decorating and food; travel; cultural reviews; fiction; and profiles of achievers and celebrities.

FAMILY CIRCLE offers the home/family woman features on food and nutrition, child care, health, decorating, crafts, fix-it and consumer awareness. The working woman finds advice on jobs and careers and how to balance work and home life. For the active woman, there is beauty, fashion, diet and fitness. Issues also include reports on newsworthy social issues, major survey results, excerpts from important books.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING is edited primarily for homemakers. Interests: food, fashion, beauty, decorating, household appliances, needlecrafts, home maintenance, diet, health, interpersonal relations in and outside the home, social problems, personalities, fiction, current affairs. Regular column subjects include psychological self-help, etiquette, medicine and consumer problems. Plus "The Better Way," a special section of hard-fact information.

LADIES' HOME JOURNAL is edited for today's woman, addressing the challenges she actively faces in her multifaceted life. Each issue has a wide spectrum of service and feature material including food, decorating, health and diet, beauty and fashion, child care as well as articles, fiction, reportage, book excerpts, personality profiles and interviews and stories of human interest and personal fulfillment. Regular features include "Can This Marriage Be Saved?" A Woman Today" "Medinews" and "Money News."

MCCALL'S is edited for the contemporary woman. It keeps her up-to-date in every facet of her life -- from the very personal questions of human relations to the last minute word on career, politics, finance and health. Each issue features food, beauty, fashion and home management service, fiction, book excerpts and in-depth profiles of personalities in the news.

MS. is a national news magazine written for women, about women, by women. It's unique in that it explores the real issues facing women today and brings you the news you need to make informed decisions about your life and the life of your family and friends. In Ms. you find fresh, funny, lively highly charged and sometimes controversial information that can help you in so many ways.

PARENTS is edited for young women 18-34 with growing children. Editorial coverage emphasizes family formation and growth, focusing on the day-to-day needs and concerns of today's woman and her family. Regular departments include: beauty, family finance, food.

REDBOOK is edited for young women today, who are juggling the demands and rewards of husband, child and jobs. Articles are geared toward helping her make "first-time" decisions in her complicated life ranging from personal relationships, home, money management, children and child care to beauty, fashion, fiction, food and nutrition.

WORKING WOMAN is edited for women who are in management careers, in business. Contents include a special section devoted to entrepreneurs, as well as articles on business news, business and economic trends, technology, law, politics, current issues, finance, investment options, career fields, management, the social and behavioral sciences, travel and other lifestyle editorial as well as fashion, health and entertaining.

WOMEN'S FASHION, BEAUTY AND GROOMING

HARPER'S BAZAAR is edited for the success-oriented woman who wants to look her best. Editorial features emphasize fashion, beauty, diet, health, travel and entertaining. The editorial mix also includes profiles, interviews and articles.

TABLE A continued

MADEMOISELLE is a fashion/beauty magazine of the young women's field. With the majority of editorial pages devoted to these two subjects. Mademoiselle is perceived by its audience as a resource book of product information and trend-setting direction.

VOGUE is edited for the woman who considers fashion a way of life. The magazine's editorial pages cover fashion, beauty, health, fitness, travel, the arts, money, food, entertaining and home furnishings. Vogue also features interviews and articles by contributing writers.

SOURCE: Standard Rate and Data Service, Inc. Consumer Magazine Index

TABLE B

CIRCULATION RANKINGS 1977

1.	Family Circle	8,364,000
2.	Ladies' Home Journal	7,067,000
3.	McCall's	6,801,000
4.	Good Housekeeping	5,250,000
5.	Redbook	4,700,000
6.	Parents	2,150,000
7.	Cosmopolitan	961,000
8.	Mademoiselle	889,000
9.	Vogue	704,000
10.	Harper's Bazaar	488,000
11.	Essence	450,000
12.	Ms.	250,000
13.	Working Woman	200,000 (1980 figures)

SOURCE: THE STANDARD PERIODICAL DIRECTORY

TABLE C

TOTAL STORIES BY YEAR

YEAR	FEATURES	DEPARTMENTS	TOTALS
1970	1	1	2
1971	1	1	2
1972	1	2	3
1973	1	1	2
1974	1	1	2
1975	2	5	7
1976	21	8	29
1977	7	4	11
1978	10	17	27
1979	13	8	21
totals	58	48	106

TABLE D

TOTAL STORIES BY MAGAZINE

MAGAZINE	FEATURES	DEPARTMENTS	TOTALS
Cosmopolitan	4	-	4
Essence	-	2	2
Family Circle	3	2	5
Good Housekeeping	1	2	3
Ladies' Home Journal	3	3	6
Harper's Bazaar	1	-	1
Mademoiselle	2	2	4
McCall's	3	5	8
Ms.	24	21	45
Parents	1	1	2
Redbook	12	2	14
Vogue	2	-	2
Working Woman	2	8	10
totals	58	48	106

END NOTES

1. Susan Sontag, "Women: Can Rights Be Equal?" Vogue, July 1976, 100.

2. Grace Lichtenstein, "Feminists Demand 'Liberation' in Ladies' Home Journal Sit-In," New York Times, March 19, 1970, 6.

3. "Ladies' Home Journal has 'Lib' Section," New York Times, July 28, 1970, 13.

4. "The New Feminism," Ladies' Home Journal, August 1970, 63-71. In an introduction, editor John Mack Carter explained that "as a magazine that for 87 years has served as an emotional and intellectual forum for American women, we can do no less than devote part of one issue to an explanation of Women's Liberation."

5. Sontag, 100.

6. For a well-documented presentation of events leading to the passage of the ERA by both the House and the Senate, see Jane J. Mansbridge, Why We Lost the ERA (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1-19; Janet K. Boles, The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment (New York: Longman, Inc., 1979), 1-99; Joan Hoff-Wilson, ed., Rights of Passage (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 3-43; Mary Frances Berry, Why ERA Failed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 1-69.

7. Ann Scott, "The Equal Rights Amendment: What's In It For You?" Ms., July 1972, 82.

8. Sontag, 100.

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10. Orginally the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature was consulted to index the stories in the 1970-1979 time frame. However, since Family Circle and Cosmopolitan are not included and some articles published in the departments and columns were not indexed, this method was discarded.

11. "Letters to the Editor," Redbook, July 1972, 166.

12. Letty Cottin Pogrebin, "The Working Woman," Ladies' Home Journal, November 1972, 52.

13. Claire Safran, "What You Should Know About the Equal Rights Amendment," Redbook, June 1973, 68.

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18. Karen Durbin, "Why the ERA Frightens Women, Part II," Mademoiselle, March 1976, 57.

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21. Ellen Switzer and Wendy Susco, "Your Legal Rights as a Woman," Family Circle, May 1976, 166-167.

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23. Vogue, July 1976, 100.

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26. Ibid., 32.

27. Ibid., 32.

28. Sontag, 100.

29. Marilyn Mercer, "ERA: What Would It Really Mean?" McCall's, July 1976, 2.

30. McCall's World, McCall's, July 1976, 2.

31. Mercer, 107.

32. "What Does 'Equal Rights for Women' Mean to You?" Parents, July 1976, 70.

33. To Our Readers, Working Woman, June 1977, 7.

34. "Washington Power Play," Working Woman, August 1977, 104.

35. Judy Carter, "Why Nice Women Should Speak Out for the ERA," Redbook, October 1977, 210.

36. "The ERA letter You've Meant to Write," Ms., October 1978, 17.

37. Betty Friedan, "Where Are Women in 1978?" Cosmopolitan, August 1978, 196, 208-211.

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39. "Hollywood Mobilizes for the ERA," Ms., June 1978, 76.

40. Judy Langford Carter, "Look Who's For the ERA," Redbook, September 1978, 71.

41. Ibid., 71.

42. Carol Burnett, "My Side," Working Woman, December 1978, 88.

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